

Message Text

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SUBJECT: U.S. AND MEXICAN BISHOPS MEET TO DISCUSS IMMIGRATION

SUMMARY: TWO-DAY MEETING OF U.S. AND MEXICAN BISHOPS --
APPARENTLY ORGANIZED BY VATICAN COMMISSIONER ON
IMMIGRATION -- OPENED WITH CALLS FOR "FREEDOM OF
IMMIGRATION" ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES, HARSH
CONDEMNATION OF ABUSES SUFFERED BY ILLEGALS IN U.S.,
AND PLEAS FOR ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS. GOM (WHOSE CONSULAR
CORPS CAME IN FOR A MEASURE OF CRITICISM ITSELF)
APPARENTLY KEEPING HANDS OFF BUT CLEARLY REAPING PUBLICITY
BENEFITS. INEVITABLE CONFLICTS HAVE SURFACED OVER
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ILLEGALS AND QUESTION OF HOW OR
WHETHER TO REDUCE IMMIGRANT WAVE. END SUMMARY.

1. U.S. AND MEXICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS BEGAN SECOND
ANNUAL MEETING ON IMMIGRATION ISSUES HERE APRIL 22.
HOSTED BY MEXICO CITY'S CARDINAL MIGUEL DARIO MIRANDA,
FIRST DAY'S SESSION WAS ATTENDED BY OVER ONE
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HUNDRED CLERGY AND LAY SPECIALISTS. MOST SPEAKERS --

MEXICAN, U.S., VATICAN, AND OTHERS -- WERE CRITICAL OF ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION ALLEGEDLY SUFFERED BY MEXICAN ILLEGALS IN U.S., BECAUSE OF "DISCRIMINATORY" CHARACTER OF IMMIGRATION LAW AND "INHUMANE" ATTITUDE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENFORCING LAW. COMMON THEME WAS CALL FOR LEGALIZATION OF STATUS OF THOSE NOW IN U.S. AS MEANS OF PUTTING A STOP TO THEIR VICTIMIZATION.

2. AMONG MOST OUTSPOKEN CRITICS WAS MSGR. MANUEL CLARIZZIO, CHAIRMAN OF PAPAL COMMISSION ON MIGRATION AND TOURISM AND SPECIAL PAPAL REPRESENTATIVE (CLARIZZIO WAS REPORTEDLY MOVING FORCE BEHIND MEETING'S ORGANIZATION). CALLING IMMIGRATION A "FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF MAN", CLARIZZIO ARGUED THAT SUCH RIGHT COINCIDED WITH AN INDIVIDUAL'S BASIC NEED TO SEEK WORK AND LIVELIHOOD WHEREVER THEY MIGHT BE AVAILABLE "AS A MEMBER OF THE HUMAN COMMUNITY RATHER THAN A MERE NATIONAL COMMUNITY". RECALLED THAT POPE PAUL VI HAD URGED ADOPTION AMONG NATIONS OF A STATUTE RECOGNIZING RIGHT OF IMMIGRATION, FACILITATING MOVEMENT ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES, AND GUARANTEEING ACCESS TO DECENT HOUSING WHEREVER MIGRANTS MIGHT WANDER.

3. BISHOP OF SAN ANTONIO, PATRICIO FLORES, MADE SPLASH IN LOCAL PAPERS WITH ACID DENUNCIATION OF ABUSES SUFFERED BY ILLEGALS. SAID WOMEN WERE FORCED INTO PROSTITUTION IN TEXAS WITH PROMISES OF LEGALIZED STATUS AND FACTORY JOBS LATER ON. IN OTHER CASES, THEY WERE SOLD FALSE IMMIGRATION OR WELFARE DOCUMENTS FOR 200 TO 250 DOLLARS, OR OBLICED TO PAY UP TO 5,000 DOLLARS FOR LEGAL HELP IN OBTAINING RESIDENT VISAS. FLORES THEN ATTACKED INS FOR SPREADING NOTION THAT ILLEGALS WERE CAUSE OF U.S. DEPRESSION AND FOR CONTINUING MASS ROUND-UPS OF SUSPECTED ILLEGALS OUTSIDE SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, AND COMMUNITY CENTERS.

4. AMONG OTHER FIRST-DAY SPEAKERS WERE MS. GUADALUPE ANGUIANO, DIRECTOR FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING AFFAIRS IN SOUTHWEST U.S. REGIONAL BISHOP'S OFFICE, WHO SCORED INS FOR ALLOWING USE OF ILLEGALS FOR STRIKE-BREAKING AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEN BLAMING ECONOMIC ILLS ON THEM, AND WHO CRITICIZED IMMIGRATION LAW AS DISCRIMINATORY AGAINST LATINS; AND FR. JOSE ANTONIO ALONSO, OF PATTERSON, N.J., WHO WARNED OF SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD RESULT IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IF TWO OR THREE MILLION ILLEGALS WERE SUDDENLY DUMPED BACK INTO THEIR OWN COUNTRIES.

5. GOM HAS PLAYED HANDS-OFF FOR MOST PART. FONSEC

LEGAL ADVISOR BARONA LOBATO WAS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE BUT INSTEAD SENT LOW-LEVEL AIDE WHO MADE BRIEF, MODERATE REMARKS NOTING THAT, SINCE EXPIRATION OF BRACERO AGREEMENT IN 1964, IMMIGRANTS WERE SUBJECT TO LAW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN U.S. LABOR MARKET AND THUS UNABLE TO OBTAIN FIRM CONTRACTS AND FAIR WAGES. (FONSEC AIDE WAS THEN HIT WITH BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS AND CHARGES ASSERTING NEGLECT OF ILLEGALS BY MEXICAN CONSULAR OFFICIALS IN U.S.)

6. COMMENT: MAIN FOCUS HAS OF COURSE BEEN ON HUMAN PLIGHT OF ILLEGALS, BUT DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS OF SPEAKERS REFLECT CONTRADICTORY INTERESTS ON TWO SIDES OF BORDER WITH RESPECT TO ILLEGALS' ECONOMIC IMPACT (AS WELL AS VATICAN'S DETACHMENT FROM ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF FULL "RIGHT OF IMMIGRATION"). REFERENCES TO ASSORTED IMMIGRATION BILLS PENDING IN CONGRESS WERE LUKEWARM, WITH AMPLE SUPPORT FOR LEGALIZATION OF STATUS BUT STRONG MISGIVINGS REGARDING THEIR PUNITIVE ASPECTS. EMBASSY SHARES FONSEC APPRAISAL THAT BISHOPS HAVE SO FAR SHOWN LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF COMPLEX LEGAL QUESTIONS AND CONFLICTING BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES AT PLAY.
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